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[H.R. 1656, Secret Service Improvements Act of 2015, as amended](#)

FLOOR SITUATION

On Monday, July 27, 2015, the House will consider [H.R. 1656](#), *the Secret Service Improvements Act of 2015*, as amended, under suspension of the rules. The bill was introduced on March 26, 2015, by Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) and referred to the Committee on Judiciary, which ordered the bill to be reported, as amended, by voice vote on July 15, 2015.

SUMMARY

H.R. 1656 provides resources and creates new performance and accountability measures in an attempt to better enable the U.S. Secret Service (USSS) to carry out its mission. The bill, among other things, authorizes the creation of better training facilities, increases the agency's training requirements, increases the amount of agents the agency may hire, and subjects the Director of the USSS to Senate confirmation.

Major provisions of the bill are as follows:

Improved Security and Safety—the bill clarifies that it is a federal crime to knowingly cause, with the intent to impede or disrupt the orderly conduct of Government business or official functions, any object to enter restricted buildings or grounds, including the White House and the Vice President's residence. The bill requires the USSS to evaluate ways technology at the White House can be used to improve safety and counter threats posed by unmanned aerial systems or explosive devices. The bill also requires the USSS to evaluate the use of additional weaponry, including non-lethal weapons. The bill amends current law to permit the USSS to investigate threats against former Vice Presidents.

Enhanced Evidence Evaluation and Reporting Requirements—the bill requires the USSS to evaluate how it retains evidence and to report its findings to Congress.

Enhanced Training Requirements—the bill requires the Director of the USSS to increase the number of hours spent training, and directs the agency to provide joint training between Uniformed Division officers and Special Agents. The bill also authorizes the Director to construct facilities at the Rowley Training Center necessary to improve the training of USSS officers.

Increased Uniformed and Plain Clothing Agents—the bill authorizes the hiring of no fewer than 200 additional Uniformed Division officers and 80 additional Special Agents.

Senate Confirmation of the USSS Director —the bill requires the Director of the USSS to be confirmed by the Senate.

BACKGROUND

The U.S. Secret Service has two missions—criminal investigations and protection. Criminal investigation activities have expanded since the inception of the Service from a small anti-counterfeiting operation at the end of the Civil War, to now encompassing financial crimes, identity theft, counterfeiting, computer fraud, and computer-based attacks on the nation's financial, banking, and telecommunications infrastructure, among other areas.¹

Protection activities, which have expanded and evolved since the 1890s, include ensuring the safety and security of the President, Vice President, their families, and other specified individuals. The following are the individuals USSS is authorized to protect:²

- President, Vice President, President- and Vice President-elect;
- the immediate families of those listed above;
- former Presidents and their spouses;
- former Presidents' children under age 16;
- visiting heads of foreign states or governments;
- distinguished foreign visitors and official United States representatives on special missions abroad;
- major presidential and vice presidential candidates, within 120 days of the general presidential elections, their spouses; and
- former Vice Presidents, their spouses, and their children under the age of 16.

The Homeland Security Act of 2002 transferred USSS to the newly-created Department of Homeland Security (DHS). All of the Service's functions were transferred and it was to remain a "distinct" entity within DHS. Since being transferred to DHS in 2003, the USSS has continued to execute its investigative and protection missions. In fiscal year 2014, Congress appropriated approximately \$1.6 billion annually for the USSS to carry out its mission.³

In recent months and years, the USSS has experienced a series of security breaches and scandals. In April 2012, during a Presidential trip to Columbia, several USSS agents reportedly hired prostitutes and took them back to their hotel rooms. Several of the agents were subsequently fired.⁴ In September 2014, a person carrying a knife gained unauthorized entrance into the White House after climbing the perimeter fence. In January 2015, an unmanned aerial drone flew over the White House fence and landed within the grounds. In March 2015, it became public that senior-ranking Secret Service officials, including an agent on President Obama's personal detail, crashed a government car into a barrier at the White House after drinking.⁵

¹ See CRS Report, "[U.S. Secret Service Protection](#)," February 12, 2015.

² Id.

³ See CRS Report, "[The U.S. Secret Service: History and Missions](#)," December 18, 2014.

⁴ <http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/05/23/secret-service-agents-fired-in-sex-scandal-want-their-jobs-back/>

⁵ <http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/12/politics/secret-service-scandals-gate-crasher-dui/>

In response to these recent scandals, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee has held a series of hearings and investigated the causes that have led to these security lapses. Stating that, “due to repeated failures of the protective mission and embarrassing instances of misconduct at the U.S. Secret Service (USSS), the Committee is reviewing all aspects of the agency’s leadership, culture, protocols, training, personnel, budget, technology and tactics in an effort to understand the source of these mishaps. While the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the Protective Mission Panel (PMP) have previously conducted reviews of the agency, the Committee is seeking unique information to establish the root of budget, training, technology, morale and mission challenges.”⁶

According to Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte, “the Secret Service Improvements Act of 2015 provides much needed resources to the Secret Service that enhance agents’ training, strengthen security at the White House, and improve transparency and accountability at the agency. This legislation also requires Senate confirmation of the Director of the Secret Service. It defies logic that the person we entrust to not just protect the President, but to also head a \$1.5 billion federal law enforcement agency, is not subject to the same process of advice and consent as his counterparts at other comparable agencies. Collectively, these resources and changes will help reform the Secret Service and restore it as a sterling law enforcement agency.”⁷

COST

A Congressional Budget Office (CBO) cost estimate is not currently available.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information please contact [John Huston](#) with the House Republican Policy Committee by email or at 6-5539.

⁶ See Oversight and Government Reform press release, [“Committee Issues Subpoena to U.S. Secret Service.”](#) July 9, 2015.

⁷ See Judiciary Committee press release, [“Goodlatte, Conyers, Sensenbrenner, Jackson Lee Unveil Secret Service Reform Legislation.”](#) May 26, 2015.